

**Reflecting on Connecting to God the Creator**  
**Ps 90:12, Ecc 3:1-13, Gen 8:20-22**

Well brothers and sisters in Christ – here we are on the last Sunday of 2015. Another year is drawing to a close and as it does it is a good practice to look back and reflect upon what has occurred in our lives and in our life together.

And so I wanted to do a bit of that in the message this morning – but not just for sentimentality’s sake but so that our Lord Jesus can answer the prayer of Psalm 90:12 for us.

We heard that prayer read this morning, *“teach us to number our days”* - in other words instruct us on how to reflect on, and understand, and categorize the time that has been given to us.

Just as the writer of Ecclesiastes does, in that famous passage which says *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...”* (3:1)

The writer knows this because he has “numbered” the days.

He can see there is a time for this, and a time for that – and through reflecting on these times the writer has become wise about knowing when it is the right time, the appropriate time, to pursue one thing over another.

And this illustrates the second half of the prayer of Ps 90:12 *“so that we may gain a heart of wisdom”*

In other words that we may acquire a life, that is centered around, living skillfully, in this world which God created.

So we’re going to reflect on the past year, in order see how we might understand what occurred in that time period, so that we might better center our lives in response to the way God orders His creation to work.

So what has happened over the past twelve months?

Well, in one sense that question contains part of the answer – the passage and the marking of time has occurred.

The sun rose and set, so the earth travelled its orbit around the sun 365 times, at precisely the right speed.

And the moon regularly completed its orbit around the earth, so that we have been able to mark off the days into months and the months into another year.

And the earth also rotated and tilted on its axis throughout its orbit so that we have had our seasons for seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, spring and fall.

So - the very fact that we have another year to reflect on makes us wise to the fact, and calls us to center our lives on the fact that God is a faithful covenant keeping God.

He has continued to uphold his covenant promise that the scriptures reveal to us in Gen 8:22 *“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”*

So to center our lives on this wisdom and to live skillfully by it means that we recognize that everything that happens in this world takes place with-in the context of Yahweh’s Covenant with His Creation.

And this guides us towards the proper order of reflection, where we start with God’s big covenant picture, and work in towards our personal individual experience – as opposed to each of us making our own personal experience the center and starting point of our reflection.

And so, having just celebrated the Incarnation of the Word of God – born into our world as Jesus Christ, we are reminded that God is working and moving His big-picture covenant along towards fulfillment and completion.

And the wisdom that come to us about “numbering our days” from the Incarnation is that it’s not about us – and yet it is about each one of us.

The Covenant creating, re-instating, preserving, fulfilling and completing God has an overarching redemptive plan for His creation which He brings all things to work together for.

So the big picture is decided by God – not us and our individual little lives.

But yet scripture reveals to us in Romans 8:28 *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

So yes it is about us and our individual little lives.

Centering our lives around that truth helps us to both shake off the persistent pride of humanism, and restores the biblical truth that we were made in the image of God to rule, explore and continue developing His creation as stewards.

And reflecting on the past year from that perspective, weds the corporate events we experience to the personal events that we’ve experienced.

So that we’re not setting up an either/or dilemma of reflecting on either our church life or our personal life.

Having numbered our days according to the truth revealed in scripture we reflect on both our church life and our personal life because they come together in our true identity as stewards made in God’s image.

Does that make sense?

So, let’s reflect on the past year in this way shall we? Let’s look back at how this past year unfolded for us as a congregation and reflect on how that helped each of us steward God’s creation.

This has been a year of many blessings for us at Valleyview.

If you remember, at this time last year we formally welcomed quite a number of you as official members after you completed the Valleyview 101 course.

In addition to all those we welcomed and baptized back in the fall of 2014, at the start of 2015 we welcomed Anne and Uche Eme, Comfort and Chuks Chukwu, Portia Adegbulu, and Joeba Brown.

And then we ran a winter Valleyview 101 Session and in the spring we welcomed Wally and Paula Rude, and Temi Adetola and Joe Nagy as members...

And in addition to welcoming Joe, I also had the privilege of officiating his marriage to Janet Storey in February and we had the opportunity to celebrate that with them later on as well.

And, we did a March break youth intensive Valleyview 101 course for our youth and young adults and in August – just before most of them left for college, Ibi, Omi, and Sobob Brown, and James, Liz, and Kelly Eme, and Ollie Adegbulu and Mayowa Dawoda all made a public profession of faith and become members of Valleyview, and Mayowa also received the sign of Baptism!

The amount of youth involved in this and the potential for growth in this area made us realize that it was time to look at hiring someone who could specifically focus on developing our ministry to jr & sr. high youth.

So at our Annual Growth Meeting, we approved the increase in our budget to hire a part-time youth leader and we began looking for the person God wanted to have working in that leadership position.

And speaking of leaders – this past year we've also invested a great deal of time training and growing leadership for our prayer ministry and our Christ Care group ministry.

John & Cheryl Gill, Comfort & Chuks Chukwu, Philipine Appiah, Barrie Wilson, Anne Eme and Joeba Brown all went through eight months of Christ Care leadership training.

And this past fall they have started three new groups that are off to a strong start!

Additionally we have had Comfort Chukwu and Philipine Appiah, Lois Wallace and Claudette Leacock, Anne Eme and Temi Adetola commit to the weekly work of being our intercessory prayer ministers on behalf of our church.

They have engaged in some specific training material for this ministry as well as attending the Dunamis Conferences in April and November for further ministry experience and equipping.

But of course the Lord gives us all these blessings of members, and leaders and giftedness for ministry so that we can be a blessing to others.

And this past year also provided plenty of opportunity for that as well.

We have served the less fortunate in our city as we have hosted Inn from the Cold, and we are currently in the midst of discerning what Christ would have us do in response to needs of the refugees from the Syrian crisis.

We have ministered to and prayed for many people in our congregation or who are connected to our congregation, who have been sick and struggled with illness.

And we have walked with those who have experienced death and loss and continue in their grief.

We have encouraged others who are wrestling with doubt and struggling with unbelief, and we worked with the Holy Spirit to help those who needed to forgive others and be delivered from the enemy's oppression.

Additionally there have been people who have lost their jobs and people who have had to go through tough times in their businesses, and we have seen God provide for them and uphold them through this difficult time of transition.

And for some of our congregation this has been a year of transitioning away from Valleyview – to go to new places where God is calling them to settle and serve.

So we have said goodbye to George and Wendi Forster who have moved out to Cochrane and are settling into a new church there.

And we had a whole group of our Sr. High youth finish high school and make the transition off to university and college and work.

In addition to those who I mentioned that made profession of faith, there was also Carmen Astle, Eric Smith, and James Rude who moved into this new phase of their life this past September.

And as we moved into the fall, we had some new faces and families visiting us and checking us out as well as some familiar ones returning to us again – with the overall result being another year of increasing worship attendance.

We were pleased to have Dan Krause returning to work with our youth as our new part-time youth leader, having spent the

previous year getting acquainted with them in his role as an Ambrose practicum student.

And we were pleased that this fall Amoriza Gunnink would be staying with us after having been away studying over the past two school years.

And we've been blessed in getting to know Philip Ibiam and his family – especially in Philip's willingness to use his gifts in music in our worship ministry.

And worship is the heartbeat of our life together as a congregation so we should also look back at what we've focused on in our worship over this past year.

So, looking back at the start of last year in January we embarked on a two month exploration of all the Covenants in scripture.

Starting with the original Covenant of Creation and moving through the subsequent Covenant administrations of

Commencement, Preservation, Promise, Law, Kingship, to their fulfilment or Consummation in Jesus Christ.

And from there we saw how important and integral the family structure was to the Covenant relationship between God and His people, and so for the month of March we looked at what was involved in Covenant parenting.

Then in anticipation of celebrating Easter, in the month of April we took a closer look at the theological significance and the correct understandings some of the important events surrounding and leading up to this part of Jesus' work.

We looked at the Triumphant Entry on Palm Sunday, the substitutionary atonement of Christ on Good Friday, the true story of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

And then we brought the story through to completion by looking at the importance of Jesus' ascension into Heaven, how that enabled the occurrence of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and how we are now living in the

age where we are anticipating the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And after this summary of the important highlights in Jesus' ministry and work in the months of May and June before summer vacation came around, we studied a selection of Psalms, from the beginning through to the end of the book, and explored how they are songs which lead us to faith in Christ.

And during the summer break, I think it's significant to note that I was able to fill four out of the five pulpit supply Sundays with people from our own congregation – and I heard good reports about the preaching.

Then in August when I returned from vacation, we reviewed some of what we had already learned from the Revelation of Jesus Christ about how we must understand the war, and terrorism and persecution of Christians that goes on in our world – and has been featured prominently in the news this year.

Then we geared up to get back into our ministry season in September and promote involvement in the Christ Care to the congregation with a series on Meeting together and focusing on some of the important aspects of “how” we are the body of Christ together.

Then in October we began to prepare for something that had been percolating in our worship ministry since April.

And I’m going to pause here for a moment – first because we’ve listed off quite a number of blessings and examples of our Triune God at work in His church and in our lives and we just need to give him thanks for that.

Praise Father, Son and Holy Spirit –AMEN!

But I also want to ask you if during the recounting of some of those congregational highlights, did you recall a specific example of how that helped you be a better steward or simply function as the Stewards of His Creation that God originally intended for us to be?

I’m sure you might recall instances where we’ve experienced more of God’s grace, more of Christ’s forgiveness, more of the Holy Spirit’s power – and that is good and necessary.

And it’s necessary because it sets us up and prepares us to come back to our original calling as Stewards, made in God’s image, who are called to develop and continue creating with God’s creation.

And in this past year, one of the significant areas that I believed God wanted to grow us in - was in our understanding and capacity as Stewards of His Creation.

So to this end in October we begin preparing for a green worship experiment in November.

We looked at a number of scriptural and theological foundations that would set us up to be ready to participate in a Sunday morning experience that would offer us a chance to practice looking for God’s Word in His creation – and experience what that is like.

So that when we are out in our ordinary everyday life, we are able to start to do this on our own – and this will help us to not only expand the places where we experience God, but also help us become better Stewards of His Creation.

So in November – after much deliberation, brainstorming, and planning we launched our green worship experiment – the TALK Show.

I believe most of you here this morning attended at least one of these experiences – and they were unique.

I've never encountered anything like it anywhere else, nor have I been involved in creating anything like this before – it was a very different and unusual experience – created for the purpose of helping us practice seeing God's Word in Creation instead of in the scriptures – or perhaps more accurately, to see God's Word in Creation by wearing the glasses of scripture.

And I have to say – I received more feedback and comments on this experiment than on every other sermon series I've ever done - combined!

So I've been looking for a way and an opportunity to allow us to share our experiences and insights and how God has worked in us through the TALK Show because it is a helpful part of the learning process.

And because I've learned through Dunamis that when people experience something new and strange and perhaps disconcerting – as the TALK show was for some – that it's important to debrief that experience together to see how God was actually at work, and allow people to understand what others were experiencing.

So as we close out this year, and this morning's message – looking back and reflecting upon our life together as a congregation, with some of the highlights and significant events that have occurred – I think we have the opportunity to

reflect together for our corporate benefit and do what Psalm 90:12 prays for in regards to our experience of the Talk Show.

We can number our days and reflect and share together on what we experienced, so that we might gain a heart of wisdom, towards becoming better stewards of God's Creation and experiencing God in new ways.

So I'm going to stop talking – and lead us in a prayer to transition us into a time of reflecting and sharing on some of what we've experienced in this past year in our Green worship.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank-you for another year.

For the time that you have given us to eat, drink and find satisfaction in our toil.

But Lord we know that we are made for more than that

We made to eat and drink and find satisfaction in being your image bearers to your Creation – this is our Holy calling and purpose.

Holy Spirit, we pray that you would come amongst us now  
And bring to mind, the experiences you would have us share  
And reflect upon from this past year  
So that our Lord Jesus may be glorified  
That His body may be edified  
And so that All things may be sanctified  
And we may grow in our relationship with the Triune God  
Creator, Savior, and Transformer  
Amen.